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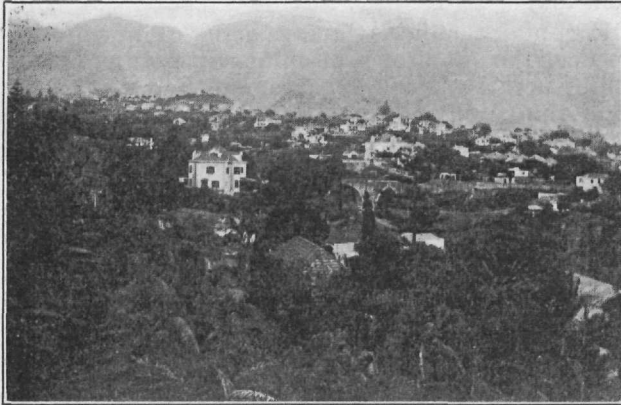
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A DAY IN MADEIRA

By EDWARD M. SCHOENBORN, Ch.E. 4



Madeira

Our first glimpse of Europe was through a porthole, for after seven days of tempestuous sailing we had at last crossed the Atlantic and were now quietly anchored in the Bay of Funchal. In marked contrast to the sharp, cold days spent on the open sea was this glamorous, radiant morning—the sunlight almost blinding for a time, the air, warm and heavy with the pungent odors of the sea and tropical vegetation.

The first signs of life in this region of the earth soon exhibited themselves, for just outside the ship's hull and apparently beneath our port windows quite a clamor arose. Shrieks and yells, commands and requests—all foreign and unusual to our ears, mingling with the sound of splashing water, echoed through the open porthole. Looking out to satisfy our curiosity concerning the hubbub, our gaze first fell upon a glorious sight—the island of Madeira resplendent in the golden haze of the morning. Here was our first view of land in seven days, a sight that seemed to welcome us most heartily. It was quite difficult to realize that we were now over three thousand miles from home.

Just opposite our window, Funchal rested on the gentle slopes of cloud-wreathed mountains and looked over the harbor at us through the early mists. To each side of the city, rugged and desolate mountains extended, stretching up into the clouds above and dipping into the blue of the sea below. In the harbor before us, hundreds of boats, some large, some small, punctuated Funchal's white image, mirrored in the emerald sheet of water, as though knowingly at ease after long voyages.

And immediately beneath us was the pandemonium that greeted us. In a swarm of small boats were boys and young men, nude but for loin cloths, brown-skinned and strong, yelling at the tops of their voices and waving frantically. They were the diving boys begging for coins—a crew, we found later on, to inhabit almost every Mediterranean port. Coins tossed into the water by the tourists were readily retrieved by these little bodies. A splash—and soon a smiling, dripping figure would emerge from the depths to exhibit his treasure, either between his teeth, or in the

palm of his hand. High above us we found that some experts had scaled the sides of the ship on ropes, to the uppermost decks, and were diving off and swimming underneath the ship to the other side for a dollar—truly tremendous feats by which to earn a living.

On going ashore in the little tenders which kept up a constant traffic between the ship and the quay, we experienced for the first time the pleasure of viewing our big liner from a distance. Its great bulk lay stretched out on the water like a sleeping giant, tiny wisps of smoke curling out of its gigantic funnels bearing the only evidence of activity within it. But we soon forgot all this as we neared the waterfront, for the industry of the stone quay began to occupy our attention. Here we found a motley crowd ready to besiege us: little dark-skinned beggar children and native women, stecedores, and a host of vendors of all kinds of things; and soon we were noisily and rudely introduced to the pestilential begging and vending so common to Mediterranean countries.

Our shore program called first for our being taken through the city to Pombal Station, there to board the funicular train for a journey up Terreiro de Lucta, which rises immediately behind Funchal. A most unique experience was this ride of ours to the station. We got into quaint old bullock *carroes*, which are nothing more than crude, wooden sledges having low, cushioned seats, accommodating four persons, and covered on top and around the sides with a dirty canopy and chintz curtains. A boy ran ahead of the contraption, the driver at the side, both shouting Portuguese warnings continuously and prodding the animals on to renewed efforts. At various intervals our driver would run from one side to the other, a piece of oily rag in his hand, and throw it quickly under the runners for a momentary greasing. In such a manner we slid through narrow, cobblestone streets, turned sharp corners, and climbed up precipitous terraces, which are Funchal. Little girls ran after us throwing violets and gardenias into our laps; little barefoot boys, palms outstretched, followed screaming for blocks, begging pennies; greasy old beggars doffed their hats and begged alms; an automobile would honk by now and then, and we could scarcely sustain our own buoyancy and delight. In the streets, cleaner than at home, winding up and down, in and out, now bright, now dark, some wide, some narrow, the scene changed kaleidoscopically. Women and girls, their white and black mantillas contrasting strangely with their dark complexions, washed clothes in little ditches along side the road. Whitewashed shops displayed most colorful arrays of goods to passersby. Wine cellars opened on to the street and from them, at times, emerged that famous Madeira vintage, usually in a wicker basket carefully balanced atop some old woman's head. Little dogs ran barking at our heels or dozed peacefully on a sunny door stoop on which Columbus himself, perhaps, might centuries ago have lain communing with his boy-



Lace Vendors at the Ship

ish dreams. History has it that Columbus spent many years of his youth in Madeira.

At the station, two characters occupied our attention while we awaited our turn at boarding the train. One was the flower girl, a silent, Madonna-like figure heavily laden with flowers of all kinds, which she sold to the tourists. She is a part of the local color of Madeira, it seems, and is perhaps, the most photographed person on the island. The other was a begrimed old soul, burly potato sack over his head, barefoot and bent, who fed the old mountain engine coal, which he carried to it from a nearby bin in a wicker basket. Properly fueled, the engine was now ready and we all climbed into the step-like cars for the steep ascent. The old man also labored up into the cab, for he was the engineer as well, and soon we found ourselves moving through more fairyland.

Here we passed through the beautiful tropical backyards of the natives, with their rock fences, gentle terraces, and narrow ditches. In the windows and balconies of the whitewashed red-tiled dwellings, women paused long enough in their lacemaking or churning to wave handkerchiefs; the brown-skinned workers in the gardens halted their bullock plows to raise their hats. Laughing children still followed us as we slowly ascended, picking flowers along the way and offering them to us for pennies. The scenes shifted constantly, one more beautiful, more colorful than the other. Banana plants, sugar cane, date laden palms, and graceful willows afforded an enchanting background to the myriad varieties of vines, hedges, fruit trees and flowers, which abound everywhere on the island. The very rock formation is colorful, since the island is of volcanic origin, and the soft black loam which is extensively cultivated contrasts strongly with the rich red and ochre shades of the different mineral regions.

At the Chalet we tasted our first foreign food, and having some time to ourselves after lunch we lost no time in exploring the beautiful gardens and terraces surrounding us. Being over three thousand feet above the sea we could obtain a beautiful view of the white city and blue bay below, and colorful panorama of rugged peaks to each side. We visited a little rock shrine not far away and amused ourselves, for the rest, in bickering with the beggar children and souvenir vendors.

Most novel of all our experiences thus far, how-

ever, and a fitting climax to our fun that day, was the slide back to town. A *carrinho do monte* was our vehicle this time, and a thoroughly efficient one at that, since it consists solely of a wicker basket on skids, accommodates three persons comfortably, and depends, for its motive power, upon gravity. Two attendants run alongside to retard and guide the sled down the cobblestone path, around sharp corners, between walls festooned with bougainvillea, past wayside streams, by wine-shops, quaint doorways and balconies. Once more we were followed after by flower-laden children who seemed to be as pleased with our journey as we were enchanted. Again the scenes unfolded; more fascinating characters appeared along the way. Back in town once more we learned that we had accomplished our four-mile slide in twenty minutes, and could scarcely believe that our delightful ride was at an end and our brief stay drawing rapidly to a close.

We spent the remainder of the afternoon driving about the island and visiting the various little shops along the way. Every street held for us a fascination of its own, so that when the time of our returning to our ship arrived, our resentment almost turned to loathing.

When our tender moved up to the ship's ladder to deliver its charges, it seemed as though the activity of this little island would have to follow us. For here, together with our diving friends of the morning, were again as many boats filled with linens, laces, fruits, and what not—all being offered for sale. Since prices are always lowered just before a ship leaves port, bargaining was excessive, most of the business being transacted during the final moments of our stay.

The sun was setting as the ship hoisted her anchor. A purple haze descended over the mountains and began slowly to envelop the whiteness of the city. Soon lights began to flicker here and there on shore, while various vessels in the bay answered to our parting call. As we moved away slowly, we watched this "emerald of the sea" grow smaller and smaller; and as its ravishing loveliness faded from sight, our ship, turning its nose northward, swung into the breeze. We were on our way to Spain.

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A Carrinho do Monte